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Immigrant students in Nordic educational policy documents

Lars Anders Kulbrandstad, Heidi Layne, Heini Paavola, Anette Hellman, Hanna Ragnarsdóttir

Abstract

Research in political sciences asserts that the enactment of laws and regulations is but one element in the chain of forming and implementing educational policy. Nonetheless, the study of such steering documents can shed light on what the authorities consider as central values and goals to be promoted through education, what they see as new challenges in society and how theses should be met in the educational system. This chapter offers a comparative analysis of the treatment of children and students with an immigrant background in such documents from preschool to upper secondary school in all five Nordic countries. We ask how these children and students are defined and labelled in Education Acts and regulations, what general policy orientation can be identified in the documents and which particular provisions are put in place for this group. While the findings show some similarities across the countries, there are also striking differences, reflecting how controversies over immigration and integration spill over to the education system and echo political trends in recent years.

A challenge to existing educational policy

Due to immigration over the past few decades, the national composition of the student bodies in Nordic preschools and schools has changed. In most of these countries, there has long been national minority students, such as Sámi students in Finland, Norway and Sweden and German students in Denmark. However, with the recent influx of refugees and asylum seekers in addition to European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) citizens, the number of students with a background different from the majority has increased considerably. These students have varying school experiences, and they may have gaps in their education due to the unstable living conditions in the refugee camps and during relocation. In addition, their home languages and previous schooling languages are different from the languages in their new host countries.

This has been seen as a challenge for the existing educational policy (Tjeldvoll 1998; Taguma et al. 2009; Taguma et al. 2010; Nusche, Wurzburg, and Naughton 2010; OECD 2010). Questions that have been raised include how the fundamental educational values of social justice and empowerment can be granted to students in the new immigrant groups, and whether these students as a group have special circumstances and needs. Furthermore, additional questions include whether the language background of the students should play any role in the education offered to them, and what the aims and content of the teaching of the students' L2 should be and how it should be organised.

In this chapter, we look for answers to such questions in recent central steering documents in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. We will first offer a model describing the policy-making and implementation chain that produces such documents and then present and

analyse the documents in a comparative inter-Nordic perspective. An overview will be given on how immigrant students are named and delimited in the texts, but our focus will be on the educational provisions that are granted to such students and on the motivations behind the measures. Finally, we will critically address the relations between the special measures and general principles and rights stipulated in the acts.

There are a number of comparative studies of Nordic countries in the field of immigration, integration and minority policy (e.g. Brochmann 2015; Østby and Pettersen 2013; Brochmann and Hagelund 2012; Bevelander et al. 2013). To the best of our knowledge, there is thus far no such study of educational policy covering the entire region. Churchill (1986) gives an overview of the education of linguistic and cultural minorities in the OECD countries and includes Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, but the situation has changed considerably since the work was published. A more recent study, Mehlbye et al. (2011), compares the education offered to bilingual students, but only in Denmark and Sweden. It does, however, describe important policy differences between the two countries.

Policy chain

In the policy area we are dealing with here, as in other areas, there is chain of policy formulation and policy implementation (conf. e.g. Patton 2006; Halász and Michel 2011), which is described in a simplified way in the following figure.

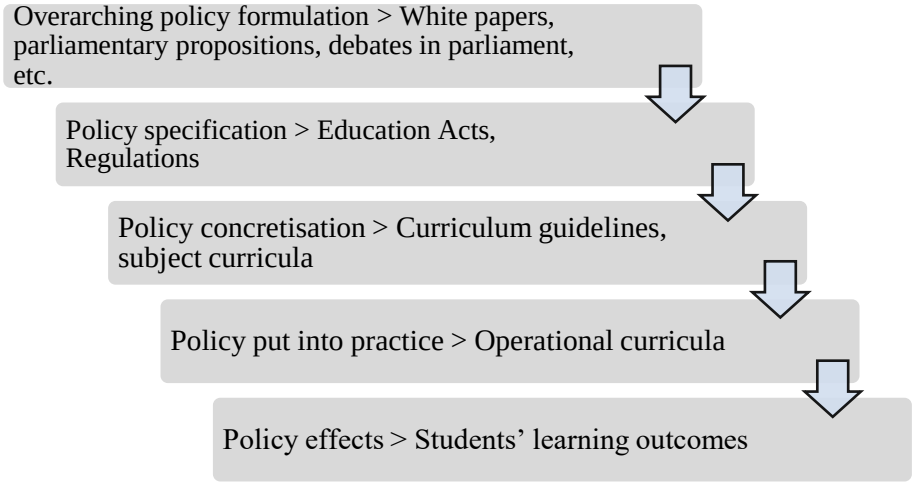

Fig. X-1: *Policy chain*

The chain starts with formulation of an overarching policy through white papers, parliamentary propositions, debates in parliament, etc. Then follows policy specification, in our case in Education Acts and regulations to the acts. The policy is further specified in curriculum guidelines and subject curricula, and it is put into practice through operational curricula in the schools and classrooms. The policy effects are the students' learning outcomes in the broadest sense. Our study centres on documents emanating from the second and third steps of the process, but we will also include some perspectives from the initial step.

Methods

The study was conducted according to the procedures for qualitative document analysis proposed in Bowen (2009). Initially we collected central educational steering documents of the kinds just mentioned for preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school in all the five countries, both in the original language and in English, if available. All Education Acts, curriculum guidelines and framework plans were considered relevant for the study, and among subject curricula, those concerning the national language or languages as second language(s) and curricula for mother tongue teaching for immigrant minorities were chosen. Fortunately, electronic versions of the documents were accessible without exception on the internet, but in some cases this was not so for the English translations. As we relied on computers to search for data in the documents with a particular bearing on our research questions, the study is based on the electronic document versions only. We used search terms corresponding to "immigrant", "minority", "foreign", "bilingual", "multilingual", "mother tongue", "first language", "second language" and "home language" in English. All hits were inspected and evaluated for relevance, and document parts that were found to deal with education for children and students with an immigrant background were subjected to thematic analysis (Guest, Namey, and MacQueen 2012). Although we cannot exclude that our selection of policy documents left out material that should have been included, we are confident that the most central documents are covered. Likewise, there might be relevant parts of the chosen texts that our procedure for data retrieval did not capture, but all in all there is reason to believe that the data do justice to the documents.

Codes were developed to capture how the documents perspectivise or frame the children and students as foreigners, migrants, members of linguistic minorities, etc. through the choice of words by which they are referred to. Another set of codes focused on the general policy orientation with regards to the group of children and students that we are talking about (differentiation, mainstreaming, value of mother tongue, etc.), while yet other codes had to do with different types of particular educational measures for the immigrant children and students, such as preparatory programmes, second language instruction and bilingual subject teaching. For each country, we interpreted document excerpts within these thematic areas, identified recurring perspectives and positions and compared and discussed the findings from all five countries.

Relevant documents

The overarching principles and regulations guiding preschool as well as school education in all of the five Nordic countries are of course common to all groups. In both cases there are, however, some particular provisions pertaining to children or students who have a linguistic and cultural background different from the majority population. The provisions vary considerably between the countries in relation to both extent and content as well as legal status.

There are several Education Acts in Denmark that are relevant to the issue at hand in this chapter. One is Dagtilbudsloven (literally: The Day Arrangement Act), where education in kindergartens is regulated (Ministeriet for Børn Undervisning og Ligestilling 2016), and here

there are some special provisions for bilingual children. Folkeskoleloven (literally: The People's School Act), regulating primary and lower secondary education, contains provisions for special language instruction to bilingual students (Undervisningsministeriet 2016a), and a more detailed account of these measures is given in a regulation to the act (Undervisningsministeriet 2016c, 2014). In addition, the Ministry of Education has a web page on subjects in basic education that are specifically directed towards this group of students (Undervisningsministeriet s.a.-a). There are a number of different acts regulating upper secondary education preparing for studies on the tertiary level, such as Lov om de gymnasiale uddannelser (literally: Act on the Secondary Educations) (Undervisningsministeriet 2016d) and Erhvervsuddannelsesloven (literally: The Vocation Education act)(Undervisningsministeriet 2017a). None of the Danish documents mentioned here seem to have official English translations.

Three Finnish Education Acts have particular relevance in the present context. The first one is Laki lasten päivähoidosta annetun lain muuttamisesta (literally: Act on Change of the Act on Children's Day Care), where regulations for day care centres and kindergartens are found (Opetus- ja viestintäministeriö 2015). Perusopetuslaki (literally: Basic Education Act) regulates nine-year basic education from ages seven through 16. The act also contains regulations for preschool education the last year before compulsory schooling commences (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 1998). Upper secondary education is regulated in Lukiolaki (literally: High School Act) (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2010). Of these only the basic education act is translated into English (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010). For all three acts, there are several regulations that will be referred to in this chapter, in particular core curricula. The first is Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet (Opetushallitus 2016b), Swedish version: Grunderna för småbarnspedagogik (Utbildningsstyrelsen 2016b), which is the national core curriculum for early childhood education and care (Finnish National Board of Education 2017). Esiopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014 (Opetushallitus 2016a), Swedish version: Grunderna för förskoleundervisningens läroplan 2014 (Utbildningsstyrelsen 2016a), is the national core curriculum for pre-primary education (Finnish National Board of Education 2016c). Both these curricula have sections on cultural diversities and language awareness. The national core curriculum for early chilhood education has a section called "Specific perspectives on language and culture" and the national core curriculum for pre-primary education a corresponding section entitled "Special questions of language and culture". The national core curruculum for basic education is Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014 (Opestushallitus 2016, English Translantion: Finnish National Board of Education 2016a), Swedish version: Grunderna för den grundläggande utbildningen 2014 (Utbildningsstyrelsen 2015a). This document has several sections that deal with the education of students with a different first language than the language of instructionand there are curriculum guidelines for Finnish and Swedish as a second language and literature. Parallel guidelines are included in the national core curriculum for upper secondary school (Finnish National Board of Education 2016b): Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2015 (Opestushallitus 2015), Swedish version: Grunderna för gymnasiets läroplan 2015 (Utbildningsstyrelsen 2015b). In addition the ordinary national core curricula for basic

education and general upper secondary education, there are core curricula for education preparing for both these levels in the educational system, meant for immigrants and students with a foreign language as their mother tongue (Swedish versions: Utbildningsstyrelsen 2016c, Utbildningsstyrelsen 2016d).

Icelandic preschool education is regulated in Lög um leikskóla (literally: Act on Play School) (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuaneytið 2008c, English translation: Ministry of Education & Science and Culture 2008d), and there is a national curriculum guide for preschool (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2011b, English translation: Ministry of Education & Science and Culture 2011). Lög um grunnskóla (literally: Act on Basic School) regulates basic, compulsory education from ages six through 16 (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuaneytið 2008b, English translation: Ministry of Education & Science and Culture 2008a), and there is a corresponding curriculum guideline (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2013, English translation: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti 2014). Here there is a curriculum for Icelandic as a second language. The act regulating upper secondary education is Lög um framhaldskóla (literally: Act on Continuing School) (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuaneytið 2008a, English translation: Ministry of Education & Science and Culture 2008) and the curriculum guide for this level of the educational system is Aðalnámskrá framhaldsskóla 2011 (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2015, English translation: Ministry of Education Science and Culture 2012). The curriculum guide for Icelandic as a second language at the secondary school level is given in a separate document (Menntamálaráðuneyti 2006).

Two Education Acts in Norway are of particular interest. Education in kindergartens is regulated through Barnehageloven (literally: The Kindergarten Act] (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2006, English translation: Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2005) and basic education (elementary through upper secondary school) by Opplæringslova (literally: The Education Act) (Kunnskapsdepartementet 1998, English translation: Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 1998). There is a framework plan for kindergartens (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2017b, English translation: Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017) and a common curriculum for primary and secondary school (Utdanningsdirektoratet s.a., conf. English web page: Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training s.a.), including subject curricula for both basic Norwegian for language minorities and mother tongue teaching for language minorities.

Sweden has one comprehensive Education Act titled Skollag (literally: School Act) covering education from kindergarten and preschool through upper secondary school as well as adult education, special education, Sámi education and education in Swedish for immigrants (Utbildningsdepartementet 2010). There seems to be no official English translation of the act, but there is a presentation on Swedish education at the website Sweden/Sverige (2018). Sweden also has a Language Act, Språklag (Sveriges Riksdag 2009, English translation: Ministry of Culture 2009), with a paragraph which mentions speakers of languages other than Swedish, the national minority languages and the Swedish sign language. As for curricula, the curriculum for the preschool, Läroplan för förskolan (Skolverket 2016), contains formulations about preschool children with a foreign background. (Skoleverket 2011b is an English

translation of an earlier version of the curriculum). There is a common curriculum for the nine-year compulsory school, the so-called preschool class and the recreation centre, which was most recently revised in 2017 (Skolverket 2017). (An English translation of an earlier version of this curriculum is Skolverket 2011a.) Here there are subject curricula for Swedish as a second language and for "mother tongue other than national minority languages". Parallel curricula also exist for upper secondary school (Skolverket 2012d, b, c).

The primary objects of investigation are the original versions of the acts and regulations, but citations will be from the English translations. Citations from documents without official translations will be given in English, translated by the authors.

Definitions and labelling

In educational steering documents concerning children and students with some kind of immigrant background, it is customary to underscore that there is great variation within this group (e.g. Skolverket 2012c). This is one of the reasons why there is disparity in how the children and students are labelled and delineated in the acts and regulations that we examine in this chapter. There may be shifting practice between different documents from the same country and even within individual documents. Furthermore, terminology and definitions may be changed when documents are issued in new versions, sometimes reflecting alterations in educational policy. Our analysis captures the most prevalent denominations and delimitations found in the most recent versions of the documents.

In the Danish documents, the terms "tosprogede børn" (bilingual children) and "tosprogede elever" (bilingual students) are commonly used at both the preschool and school levels (Ministeriet for Børn Undervisning og Ligestilling 2016; Undervisningsministeriet 2013a, 2016c). "Fremmedsprogede" (foreign language [students]), a term that appeared in previous versions of certain documents (Undervisningsministeriet 2013b), is no longer found. A definition is provided in the regulation on the teaching of Danish as a second language in primary and lower secondary schools (Undervisningsministeriet 2016c): "Bilingual students are understood as children who have a mother tongue other than Danish and first through contact with the surrounding society, possibly through the teaching at school, are learning Danish" (§ 1).

The Finnish Basic Education Act employs the term "maahanmuuttaja" (immigrants) (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010, Section 1, § 2; Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 1998), while the term used in the national curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care is "vieraskielistet ja monikielistet lapset" (foreign and multilingual children) (Opetushallitus 2016b, 48; Finnish National Board of Education 2017). The same term is also found in the corresponding guidelines for preschool, together with "kaksi- ja monikieliset lapset" (bi- and multilingual children), defined as "children with a different mother tongue and multilingual children" (Utbildningsstyrelsen 2016a). There is no explicit definition of the group of children and students in question, but the national core curriculum for basic school deals with it under the heading "Other plurilingual students", together with Sámi and Sámi-speaking students, Roma students and sign language users.

The Icelandic Preschool Act speaks about “foreldrar sem tala ekki íslensku” (in the translated version: parents who are not native speakers of Icelandic) (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture 2008d, § 9). The Education Acts for compulsory school and upper secondary school use the expression “nemendur með annað móðurmál en íslensku” (students with a mother tongue different from Icelandic) (Minstry of Education & Science and Culture 2008, § 16). In the curriculum guide for compulsory schools, we find the phrase “nemendur] af erlendum uppruna” (students of foreign origin) (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2011a, 55).

The document with central regulations to the Norwegian Kindergarten Act refers to “flerspråklige barn” (multilingual children) (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2017b, 24; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017, 23). In other official documents on kindergarten, the term “minority-language children” (minoritetsspråklige barn) is commonly used, and a standard definition is “children with a language and culture background other than Norwegian, except children who have Sámi, Swedish, Danish or English as mother tongue” (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2011, 15). In the school context, the terms “elever fra språklige minoriteter” and “minoritetsspråklige” (minority-language [users]) (students from linguistic minorities) are used to cover both a broader concept and a narrower concept. The wider one refers to students with a mother tongue different from Norwegian or Sámi (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2016) and the narrower to students who not only have another mother tongue but who also do not have “sufficient skills in Norwegian to follow the normal teaching in the school” (Department of Training and Education 2013, § 2.8 and § 3.12).

In documents on Swedish preschool education, the expression “barn med annat modersmål än svenska” (children with a different mother tongue than Swedish) is commonly used (Skolverket 2016, 7), but the phrase “barn med utländsk bakgrund” (children with foreign background) also comes up sporadically (op. cit. 6). Regulations concerning compulsory and upper secondary education employ expressions such as “en elev som har en vårdnadshavare med ett annat modersmål än svenska” (a student who has a caretaker with a different mother tongue than Swedish) (Utbildningsdepartementet 2010). In a report on mother tongue teaching, one finds the terms “flerspråkiga barn” (multilingual children) and “flerspråkiga elever” (multilingual students) (Skolinspektionen 2010). The only time “invandrare” (immigrants) is used in the educational acts in Sweden is in relation to a specific school form for adults with an immigrant background, called “Svenska för invandrare’ (Swedish for immigrants) (Utbildningsdepartementet 2010).

As we have seen, there is variation in the names and terms used for the children and students in question, not only in the documents from the different countries but also in acts and regulations from the same country. Two main categories can be identified based on the particular perspective encoded in the labels: labels referring to language and labels referring to the person’s relation to the territory of the state.

Categorisations in terms of language are frequent and include terms such as “bilingual children”, “minority-language students” and “students with another mother tongue than

Icelandic". Examples of labelling in relation to state territories are "immigrants" and "students of foreign origin". Subtypes are discernible in both categories, most clearly among the labels with reference to language. Here we have one group of names profiling the referents as being affiliated with two or more languages: "bilingual students", "children with bi- or multilingual background" and "multilingual students". Another group marks the referents as being affiliated with a different language than the majority language: "students with another mother tongue than Icelandic" and "students from linguistic minorities". We will use the tag "linguistic otherness" for this type. Subgroups are less distinct within the category of labels referring to the person's relation to the territory of the state. There could, however, be reason to treat terms denoting persons by expressions highlighting in-migration to the country ("immigrants") as different from terms focusing foreign origin ("students of foreign origin").

The following table indicates the distribution of the different types of labels in the documents we have analysed from the five Nordic countries. The table shows that terms denoting linguistic otherness are dominant in documents from three of the countries—Iceland, Norway and Sweden—while terms connecting the referents to bilingualism or multilingualism are dominant in the Danish documents. The Finnish documents show the greatest term variation.

Table X-1: *Distribution of types of labels*

	Denmark	**Finland**	**Iceland**	**Norway**	**Sweden**
Bi- or multilingual affiliation	Dominant	Occasional		Occasional	Occasional
Linguistic otherness	Occasional	Occasional	Dominant	Dominant	Dominant
In-migration		Occasional			Occasional
Foreign origin		Occasional	Occasional		Occasional

Researchers in areas such as criminology, mental health and addiction have developed a theory of the deviantising and stigmatising effects of the labelling of persons in marginalised positions in society (Townsend, Stillings, and Murphy 1977; Becker 1973). Labelling theory has also been employed in studies of how immigrants are named. For instance, Bustamante (1972) studies the use of the label "wetback" to denote illegal Mexican immigrants to the US, and Ommundsen et al. (2014) explores the effect of epithets such as "illegal" and "undocumented" on people's attitudes towards immigrants. While the labels from the Nordic educational steering documents might be less value-laden, they still imply differences in perspectivation or framing. Naming a group of students on the basis of their foreign origin ("children with a foreign background") or their minority status ("minority-language students") is something other than choosing labels highlighting their linguistic repertoire ("bilingual" or "multilingual"). This does not necessarily mean that the students are treated differently, and arguments in favour of certain labels over others are often considered to be a matter of "political correctness" (Obiakor 2001, 55). The debate over terms such as "second generation immigrants" shows, however, that the choice of designations is about more than "only" language (King 2002) and has led Nordic statisticians to change their terminology (Bjertnes 2001).

General policy orientation

Common to the steering documents for education in all the Nordic countries are such overarching principles and values as equal opportunities, tolerance and democracy. To take Norway as an example, the Kindergarten Act states that "[t]he Kindergarten shall promote democracy and equality and counteract all forms of discrimination" (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2005, Section 1). This is followed up in the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens by formulations such as the following: "Human equality, freedom of thought, compassion, forgiveness and solidarity represent core values in our society and must be used as a foundation for all care, upbringing, play and learning activities in the kindergartens" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017, 9). Among the objectives set up for primary and secondary education and training in the Education Act, we find the following: "Education and training shall provide insight into cultural diversity and show respect for the individual's convictions. They are to promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking" (Ministry of Education and Research 1998, Section 1-1). According to the recently adopted revised version of the general part of the core curriculum for basic education (years 1–12), "[a]ll students should be treated equally and no student should be victim of discrimination. The students should be given equal opportunities so that they can make their own choices. The school should take into account the diversity among the students and make it possible for everyone to experience belonging to school and society" (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2017, 5, authors' translation). Similar formulations concerning all children and students are also found in documents from Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden. At the same time, all five countries have particular provisions stipulated for children and students with an immigrant background. As we have seen, there are ordinances in every country concerning the acquisition of the majority language or, in the case of Finland, another language with official status, namely Swedish. Otherwise, the number of enactments

pertaining to the group we are dealing with differs. Danish documents contain the fewest, there are more of them in the Finnish and Icelandic material and they are the most numerous in the documents from Norway and Sweden. Denmark is the country where the learning of the majority language is most strongly emphasised and prioritised in the acts and regulations; this has a very clear focus in the Norwegian material, too, and is highlighted in documents from Finland and Iceland.

The most striking differences between the countries have to do with the place and value accorded to the children's and students' linguistic and cultural background and the prominence given to the bilingual or multilingual life situation of this group. Here again, the Danish acts and curricula are in a unique position. We just saw that these documents dominantly refer to the children and students by labels that mark their bilingual or multilingual affiliation (e.g. "tosprogede børn"); nevertheless, no general provision implies a pedagogical appreciation of their linguistic and cultural background. This is quite contrary to the acts and regulations from Sweden, where the right to mother tongue stimulation or instruction is guaranteed at all three levels of the educational system covered by our study, and where the home language and culture of the child or the student are considered to have an intrinsic value. The Finnish and Icelandic school documents also assign value the students' linguistic and cultural heritage and express an intention on the part of the educational system to contribute to strengthening their bi- or multilingual identity and competence. A similar tone is found in the Norwegian documents for preschool, while the acts and regulations for school only give the mother tongue and culture an instrumental role in the question of basic literacy skills and in the learning of the content of school subjects, on this just in cases where the students' Norwegian skills leave very much to be desired.

Table X-2 summarises the main profiles of the acts and provisions we have examined.

Table X-2: *General orientation as to education for children and students with an immigrant background*

Denmark	**Finland**	**Iceland**	**Norway**	**Sweden**
▪ Few special provisions ▪ High priority on learning Danish ▪ Linguistic and cultural background not focused	▪ Some special provisions ▪ Importance of learning Finnish or Swedish highlighted ▪ A certain intrinsic value of linguistic and	▪ Some special provisions ▪ Importance of learning Icelandic highlighted ▪ A certain intrinsic value of linguistic and	▪ Several special provisions ▪ Learning of Norwegian clearly focused ▪ Linguistic and cultural background	▪ Several special provisions ▪ Importance of learning Swedish highlighted ▪ Intrinsic value of linguistic and cultural background

	cultural background	cultural back-ground	mainly instrumental value	

Since students have different backgrounds and prerequisites for learning, their appropriate education requires adaption to varying needs and some kind of differentiation of the instruction (Mills et al. 2017). The differentiation can be pedagogical and/or organisational. The first of these forms, also called "instructional differentiation", takes place within the class context and implies that different students or groups of students receive diversified instruction, while organisational differentiation consists of dividing the class into groups that are taught separately. In both cases, the instruction can be differentiated qualitatively or quantitatively, qualitative differentiation meaning that there are differences in the content and/or method of teaching and quantitative differentiation meaning that the teaching of some students or groups of students covers less or covers more of the same content (see e.g. Engen and Lied 2011).

The strategies for differentiating the education of immigrants students that we have identified in the steering documents examined in this chapter can be placed on a continuum ranging from no particular differentiation to extensive qualitative differentiation, as shown in Figure 2. At the left end of the continuum, immigrant students are inserted directly into the mainstream without any special support, and at the right end they receive instruction taking into account their cultural and linguistic circumstances. The latter form of differentiation can be pedagogical, that is, the within-class variant, organisational or both.

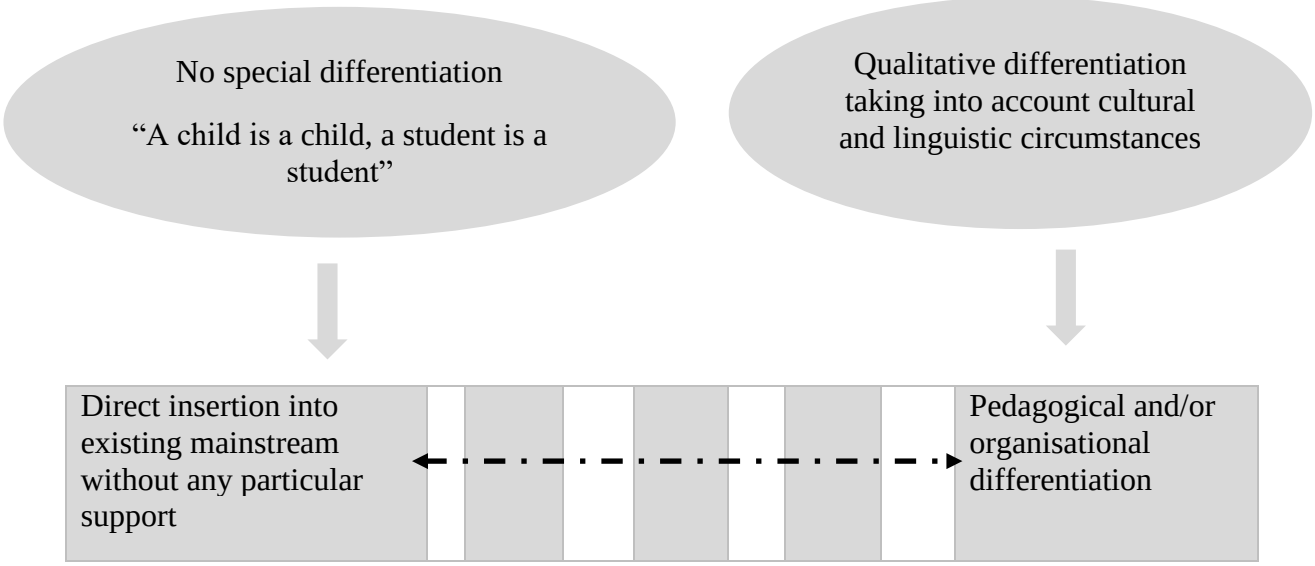

Fig. X- 2: *Main differentiation strategies*

Based on the information presented above and summarised in Table 2, we can conclude that the general education policy for immigrant students in Denmark can clearly be located towards the left end of the continuum, while Sweden can be placed towards the right end and the other three countries in between. In some respects, Norway's policy is closest to Sweden's, in other respects Finland and Iceland have more in common with Sweden than Norway has. In the following, we will look closer into the policies of all the five countries.

Particular educational measures

Children in a Danish day care institution are assessed for language proficiency at the age of three if linguistic, behavioural or other circumstances give reason to believe that child is in need of language stimulation (Ministeriet for Børn Undervisning og Ligestilling 2016). For children outside day care institutions, assessment is mandatory in any case. When a child is found to be needing language stimulating activities, the municipality is responsible for offering such assistance. The amount of stimulating activities is decided according to the need of each individual child, except for bilingual children, who are to receive up to 15 hours of stimulation per week. If a least one of the parents of a bilingual child does not have an occupation, the municipality offers language stimulating support in the form of 30 hours weekly in a day care institution. The municipality is responsible for involving the parents in the language assessment and the language stimulation and for giving the parents advice as to how they can support their children's linguistic development. Parents who do not comply with the obligation for language assessment and stimulation can see their child benefit withdrawn (op. cit. § 12). It is not directly stated that the language assessment and stimulation for bilingual children shall be in Danish, but as nothing is said about the mother tongue, we conclude that this is the case.

As for schools, the Danish Folkeskole Act, covering primary and lower secondary education, contains provisions for special language instruction to bilingual students (Undervisningsministeriet 2016a). Paragraph 5 concerns the right to receive tuition in Danish as a second language, if needed. A regulation to the act gives further specifications about procedures for deciding whether a student should be referred to second language tuition in Danish and whether this instruction should take place separately from the ordinary teaching in the class to which the student belongs or in the form of the pedagogical differentiation of the ordinary teaching (Undervisningsministeriet 2016b). Paragraph 5 in the act also deals with the right to mother tongue instruction for students from the EU, the EEA, the Faroese Islands and Greenland, and the announcement in Undervisningsministeriet (2014) regulates this instruction in detail. There is no mention of students with an immigrant background. Previously, there was a paragraph providing mother tongue instruction to such students on certain conditions, but it was later repealed, and an accompanying directive was replaced by the aforementioned regulation. Although there is no longer any legal right to tuition in their mother tongue for students from the immigrant population and no government funding, municipalities may offer such teaching at their own expense, and some do, such as the capital (Københavns Kommune s.a.). There is a national curriculum plan and guidelines for the mother tongue subject (Undervisningsministeriet s.a.-c). In addition, what is called "common

immigrant languages" may be chosen as an elective subject in years 7, 8 or 9, and there is a national curriculum plan and guidelines for this subject, too (Undervisningsministeriet s.a.).

In the Danish Upper Secondary Education Act, the only reference to immigrant students is about inclusion courses for immigrants and refugees with an exam from their home country that requires a supplement to be on a par with the Danish High School exam (Undervisningsministeriet 2016d, § 65). Undervisningsministeriet (2010) describes such courses in detail, including a course in Danish for "persons who have Danish as a second language" (Appendix 5, Section 1.1, authors' translation). The curriculum plans for upper secondary include neither Danish as a second language nor mother tongue (Undervisningsministeriet s.a.-b). The documents concerning vocational education do not refer to this group of students (see e.g. Undervisningsministeriet 2017b).

As already mentioned, there is no reference to children with an immigrant background in the Finnish Day Care Act. In the National Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland, there is a subchapter called "Special perspectives of language and culture", which also deals with "children with a foreign language as mother tongue and plurilingual children" (Finnish National Board of Education 2017, 76). These children should be supported in the development of their language skills, their linguistic and cultural identities and their self-esteem. They should be given the opportunity to use and learn Finnish or Swedish as a second language through a variety of communication situations and learning environments. If possible, opportunities for the children to use and to learn their own language or languages should be created. With the parents, the personnel should discuss the language situation in the homes, choices of language,plurilingual and multicultural identities as well as the development and importance of the child's mother tongue or tongues.

The Finnish Basic Education Act has a paragraph on the extent of instruction preparing immigrants for basic education (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010, Section 9, § 3). A special core curriculum for this instruction states that it is meant for students with insufficient skills in Finnish or Swedish to study in a pre-primary or basic education group. The programme provides teaching in the subjects included in basic education and has a focus on Finnish or Swedish as a second language and, "whenever possible", in the student's "own native language" (Finnish National Board of Education 2009). A paragraph on languages of instruction in the Basic Education Act mentions Sámi, Roma and sign language, in addition to Finnish and Swedish, but not immigrant languages (Section 10, § 1). The same is true of a paragraph on mother tongue (Section 12, § 1 and § 2). The section termed "Religious Education and Ethics" stipulates a provision for alternative religious instruction to students belonging to religious communities outside the two Finnish state churches.

Chapter 9 in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 is called "Special questions of language and culture" and has sub-chapters on Sámi speaking students, Roma students, students using sign language and other plurilingual students. (Finnish National Board of Education 2016b). Here it is stated that the students, to the extent possible, shall receive mother tongue teaching. Students whose language skills in Finnish or Swedish are

insufficient in one or more areas and do not make it possible for the students to participate in the daily communication and the work at school as equal members of the school community shall be taught according to the curriculum in Finnish as a second language and literature or the curriculum in Swedish as a second language and literature. The students may also receive special support in other subjects if this is needed to guarantee equal learning opportunities, and for newly arrived students a plan for their leaning may be developed as part of the students' integration plan. The document contains guidelines for Finnish as a second language and literature and for Swedish as a second language and literature and an appendix on goals, central content and evaluation concerning mother tongue teaching. The national core curriculum preparing for preschool or basic education describes the goals and the central content for Finnish or Swedish as a second language and literature, mother tongue and other learning topics.

The General Upper Secondary Education Act does not contain any direct allusion to immigrants (Minstry of Education and Culture 2010). The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary School does, however, have a subchapter on "Questions concerning Language and Culture" parallel to the one in the core curriculum for basic education (Finnish National Board of Education 2016b) . Here we find statements about taking the students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds into account and the possibility to study Finnish and Swedish as a second language if the students' basic proficiency is insufficient in some area of the language skills. The students may also study their mother tongue as a supplement to the upper secondary education. There are guidelines for Finnish as a second language and literature and for Swedish as a second language and literature and an appendix on mother teaching. The National Core Curriculum for Preparatory Education for General Upper Secondary Education 2014 (Finnish National Board of Education 2015) covers in particular studies in Finnish or Swedish language, but also studies included in general upper secondary syllabus, and "skills and knowledge required to study in upper secondary school" (6).

While children with an immigrant background are not directly mentioned in the Icelandic Preschool Act, one of the articles states that "[i]n the case of parents who are not native speakers of Icelandic […] the school shall endeavour to ensure interpretation for all information necessary for communication between parents and school […]" (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture 2008d, Chapter 9). The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture 2011) contains no explicit reference to immigrant children.

An article in the Icelandic Compulsory School Act on reception plans for new students has a focus on students whose mother tongue is not Icelandic. The plans for this group of students are to take into account the student's background, language skills and skills in other fields of study. Students and parents are to be provided with information about the compulsory school and consultation as needed, and parents have the right to an interpreter. The students are entitled to teaching in Icelandic as a second language, and this aims at encouraging students to become actively bilingual. Compulsory schools are permitted to acknowledge students' mother tongue language skills and knowledge as part of the students' compulsory education,

and this should replace other compulsory language education. It is, however, unclear whether instruction in and/or through the mother tongue is to be offered (Minstry of Education & Science and Culture 2008, Article 16). The Icelandic Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools stipulates the content and the organisation of studies in Icelandic as a second language (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture 2008b).

The Icelandic Upper Secondary School Act includes provisions parallel to the Compulsory Education Act. Students with another mother language than Icelandic have the right to teaching in Icelandic as a second language and should also be provided with an opportunity to maintain their mother language as an optional subject, through distance learning or other measures. Upper secondary schools are required to develop reception plans for these students. The plans should be accessible for students and parents and include information on the studies, and the schools more generally, and their right to an interpreter. The reception plan for each student should use the student's origins, language proficiency and skills in other subject areas as a frame of reference (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture 2008, Article 35). The Icelandic Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools outlines in more detail the right of students to teaching in Icelandic and the organisation and evaluation of these studies (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture 2008c).

The Norwegian Kindergarten Act states in Section 2 that "Kindergartens shall take account of children's […] social, ethnic and cultural background" (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2005), and the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017) mentions children with an immigrant background on several occasions. Section 1, *Purpose,* speaks about the increasing diversity in Norwegian society, partly because of immigration, and says that this diversity shall be reflected in kindergartens and that kindergartens shall "support children on their own cultural and individual circumstances" (8). In Section 2.5 on *Linguistic competence*, there is a paragraph on children who do not have Norwegian as their mother tongue and learn Norwegian as a second language in their kindergartens. There we read that "[k]indergartens must support [these children] in their use of their mother tongue, whilst working actively to promote their Norwegian language skills" (31). There are parallel formulations in Section 2.5 on *Kindergartens as cultural arenas*, for instance, that children who belong to ethnic minorities "must be supported in the development of their double cultural affiliations" (32). The Ministry of Education and Research has published a booklet on linguistic and cultural diversity in kindergarten (Gjervan 2006), and the government offers special grants to measures for strengthening the Norwegian language development of minority language children (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2017c). Previously, such grants could also be used to finance "bilingual assistance" (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2011), but this possibility no longer exists.

The Norwegian Education Act, which concerns primary as well as lower and upper secondary education, does not give the right to any kind of special treatment to students by the mere fact that their mother tongue is other than Norwegian or Sámi. So being a minority language student, in the broad sense of the term, does not place you in a particular category in the school context. To be eligible for special tuition, tests have to show that it is likely the student

has insufficient Norwegian skills to follow normal teaching in school. In such case, he or she is entitled to adapted instruction in Norwegian. This teaching can take different forms, being either based on the curriculum of the subject Basic Norwegian for Linguistic Minorities (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2007a) or on an adaption of the curriculum for the regular subject Norwegian. There are special guidelines for this teaching (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2009). As soon as tests show that the student has reached a level of Norwegian skills sufficient for him or her to follow the same instruction as the mainstream students, he or she is then referred to ordinary teaching.

Students who are found to have a particularly weak mastery of the language of instruction, namely Norwegian, have the right not only to special tuition in Norwegian but also to mother tongue teaching and/or bilingual subject teaching. There is a curriculum called Mother Tongue for Linguistic Minorities (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2007b) as well as guidelines for the teaching of this subject (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2009). For bilingual subject teaching, however, there are no guidelines. Just like special instruction in Norwegian, mother tongue teaching and bilingual subject teaching are transitional measures: once tests give reason to believe that students are able to follow regular teaching, they are to be mainstreamed. Thus, neither Basic Norwegian for Linguistic Minorities nor Mother Tongue for Linguistic Minorities has grades, and there are no exams.

There are particular provisions for newly arrived students; for instance the instruction can be organised in separate groups, classes or schools for a maximum of two years (conf. sections 2.8 and 3.12 of the Education Act). During this period, exceptions can be made from the curricula for the school subjects if this is seen to be necessary to cater for the needs of the student. There are special guidelines for such introductory measures (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2012).

A particular curriculum plan for Norwegian has been introduced for students in upper secondary school who have lived in Norway for only a short period of time (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2017a). Students in this category often have not managed to acquire sufficient skills in Norwegian to be referred from “Norwegian for Minority-Language Students” to the ordinary Norwegian subject. Or if they have been referred, many of them have failed the subject. In this way, they are left without a grade in Norwegian, and with an incomplete diploma they are not admitted to higher education. For the new subject, albeit adopted on a temporary basis, regular exams are organised, and grades are given.

The section on preschool in the Swedish Education Act has a paragraph on special language provisions for children with a mother tongue other than Swedish, and this is further developed in the Curriculum Guide for Preschools (Skolverket 2010). There it is stated that “[t]he preschool should strive that each child with a mother tongue other than Swedish develop their cultural identity and the ability to communicate both in both Swedish and their mother tongue” (9–10). The Education Act gives students in compulsory school and students in upper secondary school with a caretaker with a mother tongue other than Swedish the right to mother tongue tuition, granted that the student uses it on a daily basis as his or her means of

communication in the family and has "basic knowledge of the language" (basic school) or "good knowledge" (upper secondary school) (Utbildningsdepartementet 2010, Chapter 10, § 7, Chapter 15, § 19). The chapter on mother tongue tuition in the curriculum that covers compulsory education (Skolverket 2011) outlines the objectives for this teaching and states, *inter alia*, that it should give students "the opportunities to develop their cultural identity and become multilingual" (83). The curriculum for the subject mother tongue in secondary school has similar wording, asserting, *inter alia*, that the subject gives students the opportunity to develop their multicultural identity on their own terms (Skolverket 2012c).

The Education Act also provides students in compulsory school and upper secondary school with the right to study Swedish as a second language instead of Swedish if their first language is other than Swedish (Utbildningsdepartementet 2010). According to the School Regulation this right is conditional on the students' need for this alternative instruction (Utbildningsdepartementet 2011). Swedish as a second language is a school subject in its own right and has equal status with Swedish as to qualifications for further studies (Utbildningsdepartementet 2010). The curriculum for Swedish as a second language in upper secondary relates the subject to the students' life situation, emphasising that it should give them "the opportunity to reflect on their own plurilingualism and their capacity to master and develop a functional and rich second language in Swedish society" (Skolverket 2012a, 1).

Newly arrived immigrant students in upper secondary school are entitled to a "language introduction" (språkintroduktion) to make it possible for them to continue their education in the (regular) national programmes in upper secondary school (Utbildningsdepartementet 2010, Chapter 17, § 2 and § 12).

The tables below give summaries of the special educational measures for children and students of immigrant background prescribed in the acts and regulations that we analyse in this chapter. All tables have rows for measures concerning majority or official language stimulation or tuition and for mother tongue stimulation or instruction. Every country puts high priority on helping children and students at all levels who do not have the majority or official language as their first language to develop proficiency in this language. But as we have seen, there are differences in how this is regulated in the steering documents. For mother tongue stimulation and instruction the picture is even more varied.

As shown in Table 3, Denmark stands out as the country with the strongest regulatory instructions about majority language stimulation for preschool age children with an immigrant background. At the other end the scale we find Finland and Iceland, where the documents provide no special measures for this level. Both the Norwegian and Swedish texts do give such provisions.

Table X-3: *Particular educational measures for preschool children with an immigrant background*

	Denmark	**Finland**	**Iceland**	**Norway**	**Sweden**

Majority or official language stimulation	Obligatory	No particular measure	No particular measure	Particular measures	Particular measures
Mother tongue stimulation	Not mentioned	Encouragement to parents	Not mentioned	Particular measures	Particular measures

Norway and Sweden are the only countries providing special measures for mother tongue stimulation at this level, even though the documents from both Finland and Iceland also emphasise the importance of preparing the children for life in a multicultural society and giving parents advice as to how the child's "own native language" can be maintained.

The tables for basic or compulsory and upper secondary education have three additional rows. The first concerns preparatory or introductory programmes, the second bilingual subject teaching and the third religious instruction.

Table X-4 concerns compulsory school and shows that preparatory or introductory programmes are mentioned in documents from three of the countries. In Iceland there are to be such plans for all new students, but the importance of plans for immigrant students is highlighted. The documents from Finland and Norway have provisions for special introductory schemes for students with an immigrant background, which are described in greatest detail in the Finnish texts. As for instruction in the majority or official language as a second language, provisions for this are found in documents from all of the five countries, but whereas the tuition is given in the form of an ordinary school subject in four of the countries, it is a transitional subject in Norway, without grades or a final exam. Mother tongue instruction, in the strict sense, is described in the documents from all of the countries except Iceland, but there are clear differences in regard to details. Bilingual subject teaching where the students are taught through both the ordinary language of instruction and their first language within the same lessons can on certain conditions be offered to students with an immigrant background in Norway. This might also be the case in Finland although it is difficult to interpret the texts on this point. As for

Table X-4: *Particular educational measures for compulsory school children with a minority background*

	Denmark	**Finland**	**Iceland**	**Norway**	**Sweden**
Preparatory programme	Not mentioned	If deemed necessary Curriculum guidelines	Individual reception plan	If deemed necessary	For newly arrived students

Majority or official language as second language instruction	If deemed necessary Ordinary subject	If deemed necessary Ordinary subject	If deemed necessary Ordinary subject	If deemed necessary Transitional Not ordinary subject	If deemed necessary Ordinary subject
Mother tongue instruction	Locally decided and financed	"Where possible" Ordinary subject	Unclear	If deemed necessary Transitional Not ordinary subject	Ordinary subject
Bilingual subject teaching	Not mentioned	Unclear	Not mentioned	If deemed necessary Transitional	Not mentioned
Religious instruction	Exemption possible	Alternative instruction offered	Unclear	No exemption (special case)	Exemption possible

religious instruction, exemption from the school subject "religious knowledge" is offered in Denmark and Sweden, while alternative instruction can be given in Finland. In Norway, the subject is called "Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics of Life" and exemption is not possible. The situation in Iceland is unclear.

Table X-5: *Particular educational measures for upper secondary school children with a minority background*

	Denmark	**Finland**	**Iceland**	**Norway**	**Sweden**
Preparatory programme	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Individual reception plan	If deemed necessary	Not mentioned
Majority or official language	Non-existent	If deemed necessary	If deemed necessary	If deemed necessary Transitional	If deemed necessary

as second language		Ordinary subject	Ordinary subject	Not ordinary subject	Ordinary subject
Mother tongue instruction	Non-existent	"Where possible" Ordinary subject	Unclear	If deemed necessary Transitional Not ordinary subject	Ordinary subject
Bilingual subject teaching	Non-existent	Unclear	Not mentioned	If deemed necessary Transitional	Not mentioned
Religious instruction	Exemption possible	Alternative instruction offered	Unclear	No exemption (special case)	Exemption possible

As is evident from Table X-5, there are differences between provisions for students with an immigrant background in compulsory school and upper secondary school. This is particularly the case for Denmark, where there is neither instruction in Danish as a second language nor mother tongue tuition in upper secondary.

Summative analysis

Certain questions have been prominent in the political debate over what forms of education should be offered to the children and students with an immigrant background in all the Nordic countries. Firstly, there is the question as to whether there is reason to consider this group of children and students to have special educational needs. As we have seen, the educational authorities in all the countries have responded affirmatively to this question by including particular ordinances within the steering documents. Secondly, there is the question of whether the children's and students' home language and culture should have a place in their care and schooling, and, in case the answer to this is affirmative, if it should be as a subject in its own right or as an instrument for other subjects. Here, we have seen that the documents from the countries we are examining give different answers and, furthermore, that there might be discrepancies between the documents concerning different levels in the educational system within the same country. Thirdly, there is the question as to whether there is a need to give this group of children and students specially adapted stimulation or tuition in the language of instruction, and, in case the answer is yes, what the content of the stimulation or tuition should be and how it should be organised. While all five countries have particular provisions for

adapted language stimulation or tuition, there are some differences between them as to specificities.

Table X-6: *Summative analysis of particular educational measures*

	DENMARK	FINLAND	ICELAND	NORWAY	SWEDEN
Special needs?	PS: **Yes** CS: **Yes** USS.: **Limited**	PS: **No** CS: **Yes** USS: **Yes**	PS: **No** CS: **Yes** USS: **Yes**	PS: **Yes** CS: **Yes** USS: **Yes**	PS: **Yes** CS: **Yes** USS: **Yes**
Home language and culture?	PS: : **No** CS: **Limited** USS: **No**	PS: **No** CS: **If poss.** USS: **If poss**.	PS: : **No** CS: Yes USS: **If poss.**	PS: **Yes** CS: **If needed** USS: **If needed**	PS: **Yes** CS: **Yes** USS: **Yes**
In its own right or as instrument?	PS: – CS: **Instrument** USS: –	PS: - CS: **Own right** USS: **Own right**	PS: - CS: **Own right** USS: **?**	PS: **Own right** CS: **Instrument** USS: **Instrument**	PS: **Own right** CS: **Own right** USS: **Own right**
Majority language stimulation or tuition?	PS: **Yes** CS: **Yes** USS: **No**	PS: **No** CS: **Yes** USS: **Yes**	PS: **No** CS: **Yes** USS: **Yes**	PS: **Yes** CS: **Limited** USS: **Limited**	PS: **Yes** CS: **Yes** USS: **Yes**
Ordinary subject?	PS: – CS: **Yes** USS: **No**	PS: – CS: **Yes** USS: **Yes**	PS: – CS: **?** USS: **?**	PS: – CS: **No** USS: **No**	PS: – CS: **Yes** USS: **Yes**

Discussion

For quite some time, immigration and integration have been controversial issues in the Nordic countries, and policies have shifted (Kivisto and Wahlbeck 2013; Brochmann and Hagelund 2010). The same has been the case for education. This chapter does not cover such fluctuations; instead, we have examined the most recent central steering documents and presented an analysis of the policies as they are expressed on the declarative level, thus reflecting the political atmosphere in these countries. Even if this does not tap directly into policies at the operational level, it sheds lights on the principal topics and dimensions in the policy-making concerning children and students with a minority background in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

One overarching dimension is about total mainstreaming versus pedagogical and/or organisational differentiation. Here we have seen variation across countries and to a certain extent across levels in the educational system. The fact that Denmark and Sweden place themselves towards opposite ends of this dimension can be viewed as mirroring the general differences in immigration and integration policy between the two countries since the early 1990s, when Denmark took a much more restrictive course than Sweden on immigration matters, such as asylum rules, and a tougher line on integration issues, such as a focus on the immigrants' own duties and responsibilities for their incorporation (Green-Pedersen and Odmalm 2008; Østby and Pettersen 2013). The policy change that took place in Denmark in the 1990sincluded the removal of the municipalities' duty to offer mother tongue instruction to immigrant students, with the exceptions mentioned earlier, and it is particularly an opposition to such instruction that goes together with a stricter stance on integration. It is symptomatic that spokespersons of the Swedish conservative party Moderaterna now call for ending mother tongue teaching for immigrant students (Wutzler, Brunsberg, and Wengholm 2017) at the same time as the party is turning their integration policy in a stricter direction (Moderaterna s.a.). The same persons also want to get rid of the subject Swedish as a second language "in order to guarantee that all children acquire sufficient knowledge of the Swedish language" (authors' translation). Controversies over this type of subject, that is, the national language as a second language, seem, however, to be different from a disagreement about mother tongue instruction. For instance, in Norway it was an immigration-positive centre-left government that replaced Norwegian as a second language with the subject Basic Norwegian for language minorities. The motivation behind this move was that the previous subject did not function as the transitional subject it was intended to be because a number of students stayed in the subject year after year without being referred to the ordinary instruction in Norwegian. Thus it was claimed that the subject had a segregating function and, in addition, deprived the students of the high-quality teaching they would receive in the regular subject. A number of educators protested, maintaining that it was ill-advised to remove a subject that had the potential of meeting many immigrant students' need for adapted language education instead of mending weaknesses in the implementation, including insufficient teacher training and lack of teaching materials (see e.g. Ruud 2004).

As our study is centred on national steering documents, we do not cover local differences in policy and practice when it comes to the education offered to children and students with an

immigrant background. In some cases, documents on the national level leave some room for communities and schools to implement measures that are not common to the whole country. In Denmark, for instance, only children from homes where Greenlandic or Faroese is spoken and children whose parents are citizens of a member state in the EU or in the EEA are entitled to mother tongue instruction in Folkeskolen (years 1–9) (Undervisningsministeriet 2014). Communities may, however, on their own initiative offer such instruction to other groups of students, and this is done in several places, in particular in larger cities such as Copenhagen and Aarhus (Daugaard 2015). Another example is from Norway, where § 2.8 and § 3.12 of the Education Act state that adapted Norwegian instruction can be offered either through the subject Basic Norwegian for language minorities or through an adaption of the ordinary Norwegian subject. The local politicians in Oslo have decided that only the second option is to be implemented in the capital's schools. In Iceland, we have seen that the national steering documents do not provide for developing knowledge of both Icelandic and the mother tongue. The capital city of Reykjavík has, however, adopted a policy that sees the teaching of Icelandic as a second language and mother tongue stimulation or education as important elements in a programme for the development of active bilingualism (City of Reykjavík 2014).

To summarise, recent educational steering documents in the Nordic countries reflect the controversy over immigration and integration in the education system in these countries and reflect the political trends in recent years (Kivisto and Wahlbeck 2013; Brochmann and Hagelund 2010). Mainstreaming versus pedagogical and/or organisational differentiation is an overarching dimension in these documents, and in this regard, there seems to be variation across countries and to a certain extent across levels in the educational system. Furthermore, the steering documents include diverse labels, some more value-laden than others, such as naming a group of students on the basis of difference or othering from the majority (foreign origin). The diversity of approaches and labelling in the documents reflect a complex reality within the education system in the Nordic countries where efforts are being made to respond to a rapidly changing population and the diverse needs of students.

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